**VYTAUTAS KASIULIS ART MUSEUM**

Audioguide

Vytautas Kasiulis Art Museum is a new department of the Lithuanian Art Museum, established at the historical Residence of the Vilnius Society of Friends of Science. The neoclassical residence of the early 20th century in Joachimas Lelevelis street, near the Green Bridge, was built for the funds donated by the main founder, the landowner of Baltoji Vokė Hilary Lenski, as well as other sponsors. The construction works began in 1910, but the building was finally completed only in 1929. The authors of the project - the engineers Henryk Wojnicki and Jan Trojan. By the effort of the intellectuals of Vilnius region, the building became a multifunctional centre of culture and education: it housed the Society's archive, a library, a museum, hosted meetings of the Society's members and public events. The Vilnius Society of Friends of Science functioned up until the Second World War.

During 1949-1980 the building belonged to an institution of soviet propaganda – the Museum of the LSSR Revolution. In 1981 the residence has been transferred to the Lithuanian Art Museum and hosted themed and solo exhibitions, as well as the Gallery of Soviet Lithuanian Art. In 1991 it was equipped with painting, sculpture and graphic art storage facilities, while in the recent years - restoration workshops as well.

Having received funds from the European Union Operational Programme for Promotion of Cohesion, as well as the budget of the Republic of Lithuania, in 2012 the building of the Vilnius Society of Friends of Science was reconstructed and modernized, adapting it to contemporary needs of the museum. Currently this residence houses the permanent display of the works of the artist Vytautas Kasiulis, exhibition halls, conference and events centre and hosts music events.

The primary mission of the museum is to preserve and exhibit the creative legacy of the artist Vytautas Kasiulis, which was bequeathed to Lithuania by his widow Bronė Kasiulienė through their son Vytautas Kasiulis junior in 2010. The collection consists of 950 works and the artist's personal archive. The museum also hosts exhibitions of other famous émigrée artists' works.

The visitors are invited to become familiar with the life and the works of the prominent Lithuanian artist of the 20th century Vytautas Kasiulis.

**(1) The replica of the diploma composition "Manor Auction"**

Vytautas Kasiulis is one of a few Lithuanian artists to earn international recognition. Many museums, art galleries and collectors in France, the United States of America, the Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, Argentina, Australia and other countries have acquired and still treasure his works.

In 1937-1941 the artist studied and later taught at Kaunas School of Arts. In 1944 he went to Austria and Germany to refine his skills. He taught at Freiburg School of Arts and Crafts. Having arrived to Paris in 1948, he settled there for a long time. Since 1949 he exhibited his works in prestigious Parisian galleries and since 1954 - in the largest European and North American cities as well.

This part of the permanent exhibition - the improvized painter’s studio in Paris - presents the most important facts of the artist's biography and his personal belongings. Here everyone can get acquainted with various material from the artist's archive.

One of the first independent works of the artist is the natural-sized replica of the diploma composition "Manor Auction". This is the first version of the final composition of Vytautas Kasiulis as the graduate of Kaunas School of Arts in 1941. This multifigure thematic canvas depicted the process of manor expropriation. After a couple of years, in 1943, Vytautas Kasiulis added new characters, painting them right on the previous ones. Having changed the scene of the canvas with a backstage image, it has been donated to Kaunas Musical Theatre. The new version, titled "Before the Dress Rehearsal", still decorates the hall of the Kaunas Theatre today.

**(2) The picture "For Want of Firewood or a Self-Portrait", painted before 1943**

The permanent exhibition reflects the evolution of the painter’s artistic manner from Kaunas School of Arts to the Parisian period, as well as the most prominent phases of his creative work. We would like to note that when he left for Paris, Vytautas Kasiulis' works of the period of Kaunas remained in Lithuania. Our museum has borrowed them from the Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis National Museum of Art. The information about the owners of the works on display is provided in the information card with each picture.

This is an expressive early self-portrait of Vytautas Kasiulis, created while he was still studying at Kaunas School of Art. The portrait, like many other works of this period, manifests a distinct realistic direction, which matches an impressionistic painting manner. The composition is based on expressed chiaroscuro effects, subfuscous colours and textured, glazed brushstrokes. The work shows that the artist did not lack auto-irony and the ability to look at life slyly, as well as with humour even when facing the greatest difficulties.

**(3) The picture "They Are Too Critics!", 1942**

The perception of artwork, the relation between a picture and its viewer is another inexhaustible topic, which Vytautas Kasiulis was happy to embark on already at the beginning of his creative work and continued with it throughout his life. On this canvas the artist rallies a "simpleton's" sceptic approach towards a piece of art. The composition is characterized by gloomy "museum-like" colours, as well as thin, transparent glaze.

No less interesting are the composition's preparatory sketches: "The Art Critics", "The Appraisers of Art" and "At Exhibition". They hang in the niche, on the left side of the exposition, above the case with ink drawings. The drawing and colouring of the sketches are much freer and livelier, made using the colourful watercolour technique.

**(4) The picture "Mother and Child", 1946**

In this work, the artist depicted his young wife Bronė with their infant son Vytukas in her arms. The theme of maternity is depicted intimately, with great lyricism and tenderness. Using the delicate technique of pastel crayons, which he loved and had well mastered, he created a light, sublimated image of motherhood. The composition is dominated by blue, pink, off-white, greyish and yellowish colours.

**(5) The picture "In the Artist's Studio", 5th decade of the 20th century**

An artist sitting near an easel at his studio is a popular motif, that Vytautas Kasiulis really liked. This scene varied throughout all the creative phases of the author, every time discovering new shades of mood changes. The painting artist depicted in the picture, like in other similar works, is both similar to Vytautas Kasiulis himself and a little caricatured.

This composition reveals the specific type of the characters in Vytautas Kasiulis' paintings, his hobby to paint slender, graceful characters, who, according to the Lithuanian émigrée poet Henrikas Nagys, "were the only ones able to find the impossible synthesis between medieval asceticism, mysticism, and scepticism of our modern era.

**(6) "Self-portrait", 1946**

This work created during the Freiburg epoch is distinguished by its original composition. A realistic self-portrait of the artist in the lower right corner of the painting is incorporated in the usual environment of a painter's workshop, while in the background, as if "a painting in a painting" there are nudes of laying women, portrait sketches and the motifs of a creating artist, so much enjoyed by Vytautas Kasiulis. The self-portrait of the artist was painted in free, expressive brushstrokes. The tangy lights and deep shadows highlight the artist's individual facial features and his penetrating gaze. The background of the canvas is painted in small, soft, colourful brushstrokes, creating an experience of shimmering air. The colours of the painting are dark, brownish, enriched with yellowish, greenish and ochre shades, melting the outlines of people and things, as well as covering the forms with a veil of a light mist.

**(7) Ink drawings - "Artist and Muse", "Artist and his Model", "Two Women", 1947**

This case exhibits impressive, free pictures and illustrations for the lyric poem of Marie Under, which as if were created of a solid, continuous line. The drawings of Vytautas Kasiulis - "The Artist and the Muse", "The Artist and the Model" and "Two Women" - mark Vytautas Kasiulis' stylistic turn toward the decorativeness and aestheticism at the end of the fifth decade in Freiburg. Kasiulis was especially fascinated by the modern French art trends. He experienced the influence of expressionism and fauvism. This manifests in his works of this period by the decline of traditional perspective, increasing entrenchment of decorativeness, the artist's growing attention for colour and form, as well as the choice of themes - the artist paints female nudes, interior scenes.

**(8) The picture "Woman with the Artist", 1948**

One of the most beautiful works of Vytautas Kasiulis, painted while he was teaching in Freiburg, Germany, is the composition "Woman with the Artist". This canvas has highlighted the key features of the artist's stylistic changes, which in the long run became as if his artistic program: decorativeness, disappearance of perspective, sleekness of the contours of things and objects, softness of the brushstroke, fondness for bright, warm, resonant colours and inclination to aesthetise the objects depicted. The topic of woman in Vytautas Kasiulis' works was one of the most delicate topics that had accompanied him throughout all the creative life.

**(9) The picture "Refugee Camp", 1945**

The difficult and poor everyday life of refugees is conveyed in a pastel drawing. This picture testifies about the uneasy phase of the life of Vytautas Kasiulis himself, when he, after leaving Lithuania, lived in Germany, at a camp shown in the picture, which sheltered war refugees. The artist captured the everyday life of the people staying at makeshift huts and lopsided carts or simply outside with their humble belongings, picked on the fly.

**(11) Illustrations for poetry books: the poetry book of Aleksis Rannit "Shake of a Hand", Henrikas Radauskas' poetry collection "Arrow In the Sky" and Ilona Leimane's publication of lyrics "Bird of Fire"**

The book illustrations reveal Vytautas Kasiulis as a versatile artist, original drawer and graphic artist. In his early book illustrations the artist usually used linear drawing, which in his later works was replaced by an increasingly establishing means of expression - a distinguished black stain. Vytautas Kasiulis' illustrations created in Paris at the beginning of the sixth decade are characterized by modern, laconic expression, original composition, well-balanced illustration and type proportions.

**(11) "Portrait of Povilas Osmolskis", 5th decade of the 20th century**

The portrait of Vytautas Kasiulis' school fellow and friend from the times in Kaunas, the graphic artist Povilas Osmolskis in the background of an exhibition is painted in broad brushstrokes, expressively conveying the young artist's facial features. Children's books' illustrator Osmolskis worked in the German city of Tübingen and later emigrated to the United States of America. The small-format composition is dominated by darksome colours - deep blue, black, grey, introducing white and red in the illuminated areas.

**(12) The picture "Young Woman Lying Down", 1948**

It was in Paris that Kasiulis's characteristic stylistic manner, notable for the virtuoso play with lines, colour palettes ablaze with consonance of refined shades and playful stylisation of shapes became fully developed. In his works the artist turned simple everyday scenes into a strange spectacle balancing on the brink between reality and fantasy.

This is an early modern Vytautas Kasiulis' creation of the Parisian period, portraying a nude young woman lying in an interior. With its decorative and generalized expression, this canvas is similar to other works of Vytautas Kasiulis, exhibited in the first Paris exhibition held at the Raymond Duncan Gallery in 1949. We can see similarities with the book illustrations created in Paris at the beginning of the 6th decade as well. It is especially characteristic to the poetry book of Ilona Leimane "Bird of Fire" (*Ugunsputns*, 1951). It reveals the same segmented transformation resembling a print of a naked woman's body, as well as face, in which only the most general unified features and the crown of curls on the head are marked. The canvas is dominated by a bright, contrasting colour scheme - black, red, blue. The painter focuses on the active colour stain and its decorative possibilities.

**(13) The picture "In the Restaurant", 1951**

Interior scenes are an interesting field of Vytautas Kasiulis' work. They as if reveal no significant action. Similar compositions focus the artist's attention towards the search for new variations of, as it would seem, the same motif, as well as original and unexpected colouring decisions. Unfortunately, they sometimes dangerously push towards schematism. The composition "In the Restaurant" is one of the most decorative compositions of Vytautas Kasiulis, created at the beginning of the 6th decade of the 20th century. The expression of the scene painted on black background makes it similar to pastels and gouache paintings, created on black paper. Through black background the artist achieved resplendent colour intensity and contrast. With its overlapping layers the background painting is close to a stained glass piece, composed of a mosaic of individual scattered forms. The top layer reminds of a cracky photo negative.

**(14) The Picture "Seated Red-haired Woman. Seated Blond Women". Created circa 1950.**

This pastel composition conveys two female figures sitting in the same position - a blond and a red-haired one, a young woman with a dress and a woman with clinging clothes, which highlight her body shapes. A contrast between positive and negative used on one sheet creates a playful mood. This, like other works of the artist of the 5th-6th decade, especially the pastels, are rich with motif repetition, juxtapositions and similar composition principles, characteristic for naive art, as well as the works of folk artists.

**(15) The picture "Log Sawyers", 6th decade of the 20th century**

Vytautas Kasiulis' works not often depict scenes of ordinary field works. The artist painted this picture on a dark background, leaving a contour of unpainted canvas, which delineate each object. The general composition of the picture is close to stained glass - both by dark background and intensive, sparkling colours, as well as static, decorative conveyance of the scene. There is a number of interior scenes and still-lives created by the painter in a similar manner.

**(16) The picture "Gamesters", 6th decade of the 20th century**

This is an original conversation piece, the composition of which is based on a well though-out colour balance. The composition is dominated by large colour planes - green, ochre and brick red. The vertical direction of painting in small brushstrokes, which as if caress the surface of the canvas, as well as the usage of unpainted areas diversifies and enriches the surface of the picture.

**(17) "Still-life with Small Fruit Bowls", 7th decade of the 20th century**

The painting depicts a chaste and simple motif with two berry vases and a framed picture on the table. The composition is based on the laws of unconventional perspective and is a little naive. This piece is distinguished by particularly subtle and well-balanced colouring, which reminds various greyishly pinkish pearly hues. The picture was painted in small brushstrokes-flecks, which give the surface of the painting an impression of merging colours.

**(18) The picture "Fisherman On a Boat", 6th decade of the 20th century**

The expression of this oil composition, where the cold colours are as if diluted with grey and black, reminds Vytautas Kasiulis' lithographies. The horizontal elongated silhouette of a boat is divided into two symmetrical parts - the top and the bottom, the view and its vibrating reflection in the water. The composition is decorative, static, painted in a particularly thin layer of oil paint, which as if lost its oily characteristic to glow. Through it we can see the fine woven canvas - Vytautas Kasiulis' favourite material during the 6th-8th decades.

**(19) The picture "Duck", 6th decade of the 20th century**

This is a particularly decorative composition, depicting a silhouette of a bird shot during a hunt. The artist was not as much interested to create a realistic and detailed picture as to convey its aesthetic, decorative and colour impression. The canvas is dominated by yellowishly greenish and greyish colours.

**(20) The picture "Fishermen", 6th decade of the 20th century**

In Paris during the 6th decade Vytautas Kasiulis studied the basics of lithography, belonged to the international guild of graphic artists "La Trait", participated in its activity, as well as exhibitions held in France. Having understood the basics of creating lithographs, he often used to use this technique. The manner of creating lithographs, the embrocation of paint, reminiscent of a brushstroke, can be noticed even in his oil compositions.

**(21) The picture "Houses in Skansen, Sweden", 7th decade of the 20th century**

Swedish cities and landscapes of various locations enrich the themes of Vytautas Kasiulis' works with colourful, festive and fabulous views. They capture the moments of travel of the artist's family and specific motifs of Swedish villages etched in memory. In these pieces the artist combines various techniques - gouache, pastel, watercolours, oil and fills his works with an abundance of rainbow hues.

**(22) The picture "Sweden", 6th decade of the 20th century**

The theme of Swedish motifs complement Vytautas Kasiulis' creative legacy, where there is not much space for landscape. The cosy architecture of Scandinavian towns, drying fishing nets and boats left near the lake after fishing, were observed by the painter during his travels in this country. He used to stay there during summers with his family, invited by his mate Stures Andersson. During his travels Vytautas Kasiulis has painted many motifs of the landscapes that he liked: windmills, churches and historical monuments of architecture, charming by their contrast colours and moods.

**(23) The picture "Red Lobster", 6th decade of the 20th century**

The painter has painted the still-life with a lobster on a plate during his mature creative period. The composition of this canvas is particularly decorative and ornamental. The motif of a lobster is conveyed using refined stylisation, while the effect created using the means of expression remind of the impression reached in the artist's pastels or coloured lithographs.

**(24) The picture "Woman Lying Down", 6th decade of the 20th century**

Framed in a black outline, the woman lying in a pretentious pose remind the classical quote of art - a nude odalisque. The woman is portrayed lying in a background of abstract nature. The piece is very rhythmic, musical, performed in a little dry, graphic manner and is of temperate, monochrome colours.

**(25) The picture "Engaged Couple with Bouquet of Flowers", 7th decade of the 20th century**

This is a sweetish salon scene, painted as domestic idyll. The centre of the canvas is occupied by the couple standing near the table, gently holding hands. The piece gives a lot of space for the details of environment: here we can see two pictures, a colourful bouquet of flowers in a vase and carefully painted details of the costumes of the characters.

Vytautas Kasiulis's late creative style stood out in a special attentiveness for, as it seems, quite trivial interior decoration elements, which are given the same importance as the characters depicted.

**(26) The picture "The Cellist", created circa 1965**

One of the many versions of the composition depicting a musician is conveyed with pastel. The character of a musician has been created by using the technique of both lithography and pastel. There are at least several colour variations of this composition. The silhouette of the violoncellist and the colour expression is closely related to the means of expression of a stained-glass piece.

**(27) The picture "Moulin Rouge", 9th decade of the 20th century**

The picture "Moulin Rouge" has been painted during the late creative period of Vytautas Kasiulis. The title means "The Red Mill". The artist's works of this period are characterized by a strong sense of compositional eclectics, fine forms, complicated stylisation and an abundance of characters. The noisy spree of the visitors of the night cabaret, echoed by an expressive group of dancers in the foreground, hypnotizes the spectator pulling him in like the huge sails of the Red Mill.

**(28) The picture "Rider Watering His Horse", 6th decade of the 20th century**

Vytautas Kasiulis' pastel works are a valuable part of his creative legacy. These drawings made with pastel crayons on black paper clearly reveal the artist's distinctive creative manner, where as if a negative image surfaces through brighter-coloured contours of objects or flashes of brushstrokes. The colours of the idyllic, peaceful rural life scene glows like a stained-glass piece of a medieval craftsman. In their expressiveness, powerfulness of colour palettes, and strength of the composition, Kasiulis's pastel works measure up to the carefully worked through large-format oil canvases.

**(29) "Composition with Three Figures", 8th-9th decade of the 20th century**

This striking decorative canvas was painted in Vytautas Kasiulis' late creative period. In its centre - a composition of three nude women. Colourful female silhouettes, painted in white, red and blue brushstrokes, are reminiscent of the Graces of the ancient times. Behind the figures the multi-layered background shimmers with the spectrum of all the colours of the rainbow and as if absorbed the patterns and ornaments of the surfaces of the environment in the room. There is no coincidence that due to their sophistication, the contemporaries of Vytautas Kasiulis compared

**(30) “Hunters with Their Kill”, 7th decade of the 20th century.**

The canvas painted in the 7th decade has all the features of the late creative style of the painter – the flatness of the composition, decorativeness, fined down forms, graphicality and colouring glowing in all the colours of the rainbow. The motif of hunting scenes was well-liked and created in different variations during individual creative periods. In this composition the artist sought for expressive extraction of the general silhouette of the whole group depicted in the general abstracted background, shimmering with lights and undertones. The two huntsman figures and the kill they carry tied to a pole put the viewer in a playful and elevated mood.